

THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO MODERN CIVILIZATION.

THE
ANNUAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

GENERAL UNION PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

OF

DICKINSON COLLEGE.

CARLISLE, PENNSYLVANIA,

July 8, 1846.

BY REV. T. V. MOORE,

OF GREENCASTLE, PA.

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DICKINSON COLLEGE, *July 9th*, 1846.

DEAR SIR:—I am instructed by the members of the General Union Philosophical Society to present you their thanks for your admirable address, and earnestly to solicit a copy for publication.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W. H. ALLEN,

REV. T. V. MOORE.

CARLISLE, *July 9th*, 1846.

DEAR SIR:—In reply to your polite note of this afternoon, I would say, that as my object in preparing the address referred to was to do good, if it shall be deemed that this object will be further attained by its publication, I am not willing that any hesitancy I might feel personally to this step, should prevent me from complying with the request of the Society.

I am very respectfully yours, &c.,

T. V. MOORE.

PROF. W. H. ALLEN.



ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN of the General Union Philosophical Society. The man who desires to be extensively useful to his generation, must understand its necessities. The history of the world is a series of problems, having the dealings of God and the nature of man for their factors: and to each generation is there committed for solution its own particular problem in this sublime analysis. A portion of this problem is assigned to every individual of that generation, and though it be but the part of a single unit, yet that unit is essential to the accuracy of the result. To each individual man, therefore, however humble be the sphere he may occupy, the right discharge, and therefore the right knowledge of the duties of that sphere, are important, for this is his all, and is linked by unseen ties to facts that are wrapped in all the awful significance of eternity.

To the generation that live and act in the age and land in the midst of which our lot is cast, there has been entrusted one of the mightiest problems ever committed to a people for solution. The mode in which this problem is solved will determine, for the weal or wo of millions, whether free institutions are possible in connection with great and rapid development and advancement of individual and social character; and if so, what are the conditions under which this connection can most advantageously exist. In a short time comparatively and many at least of you, gentlemen, will bear a part in the settlement of these great interests. And whether your part be one of prominence or of obscurity, you are in either case bound to act it honestly and intelligently. True greatness and honor consist not in the place which a man fills, but in the way in which a man fills his place. The hissing reptile may crawl its

slimy way to the eagle's nest, but it is a reptile still, while not the humblest creature God has made, when in its place,

“But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubims,”

and is essential to the perfection and harmony of the whole. Hence whatever be your future lot in life, it is important to you, that you enter it fully aware of its demands, and thoroughly prepared to meet them, as far as you may possess the ability.

It is not the object of the present discourse, to present to you a summary of the characteristic wants and defects of our age, the supply of which will constitute in part your duty. That such deficiencies do exist none but the ignorant or the designing will deny; and that the attempt should be made to remove them, none but the weak or the wicked can doubt.

There is, however, one characteristic which is equally prominent and perilous in our state of society, and to which the attention of the educated youth of our land should be distinctly turned. It is a growing disposition to separate as far as possible, Christianity from our public and social life. Whether this is a defect or not, it can scarcely be denied that it is a characteristic of our age. Religion may be regarded as a very good thing perhaps in private, but as often a very awkward thing in public life; a very necessary thing with which to die, but a very inconvenient thing often with which to live. It is viewed as something whose domain, like that of the travestied Socratic philosophy, lies in the clouds, and can never be brought down to the level world of daily life. Like some of the maxims and deductions of mathematical science, its theorems and lemmas are regarded as theoretically correct, but as utterly incapable of being practically embodied in the earthly and gross materials with which men must work in civil and political life. It is deemed of so subtle, impalpable and sensitive a nature as to shrink from all combination with elements so rude and boisterous, and as liable to exhale to heaven its pure and fragrant essence in the attempt at such an amalgamation. Hence, whilst in every other government in the world, there has been a most formal

and explicit recognition of some form of religion, in the fundamental laws of the state, and in most of their solemn public acts, and the governing power held to be distinctly and officially bound to submit to the principles of that religion, and do nothing to their infraction ; and whilst in every other government of any importance that has ever existed, there has been a formal provision for the religious instruction of the people and an admission of their religious instructors to the most plenary civil rights ; in our own it would be difficult to detect in our fundamental law, and many of our most solemn national acts, the slightest recognition of the very being of God, much less of Christianity. And not only is there no public support of the ministers of religion (which of course we would most earnestly deprecate), but in many portions of our land they are not even permitted to entertain, or express an opinion on the great topics of political action, except at the peril of provoking the petty proscription of some political partisans, and a practical definition of what they mean by freedom of speech and action. There is a growing disposition on the part of infidelity and latitudinarianism to demand a suppression of the few traces of Christianity, that appear in our statute and common law ; and in too many cases a growing disposition in our national and state legislation to yield to these demands. The adduction of specific instances of proof to these allegations might be invidious, and is perhaps unnecessary. It is only necessary for any man to compare the spirit that ruled the colonial legislation, especially that of the New England colonies, and that which appeared in the acts and speeches of the early federal congress, with the spirit that now reigns in our halls of legislation, national and state, to see that a wonderful change has been wrought in the relation of religion to the national mind. Acts were then passed, declarations then made, and recommendations given, which would be as impossible now as the establishment of an inquisition, or the ordering of an *auto-de-fé*. This fact we deem unquestionable in our national history. To some this feature in the flow of our national life, is a matter of congratulation. They deem it simply a growing emancipation from the ghostly trammels of the past, a more free and liberal spirit of national action,

and a more expansive growth of genuine civilization. They believe that the point of separation has at length been reached between Christianity and national advancement, and that henceforth they will each proceed on a hyperbolic curve of eternal departure, to the great relief and advancement at least of all civil and political interests. To others this change appears as an ominous retrogression, and this defect as fatal, unless sufficiently supplied and compensated.

The question at issue here is a vital one, and one that reaches to the very foundations of society, and hence must be fully and honestly met. If Christianity be either hostile or indifferent to the advancement of society, its present position in our country is proper, and the sentiments of the former class of thinkers correct. But if, on the other hand, it be either essential or favorable to any permanent or legitimate social improvement, then its present position is improper, and the fears of the latter class of thinkers well grounded. It is the duty then of every man, and especially of every educated man, to have his mind clearly and firmly decided on this question, before entering upon public life. It is to aid you in this decision that I have selected the theme of discussion thus suggested, rather than any lighter literary topic, for your consideration on this occasion.

I lay aside the obvious advantage, which I would possess in an *a priori* argument from the assumption of the divine origin of Christianity, and the consequent necessity for its beneficial influence on society; because it might be alleged to be an unfair assumption of ground, which if even not questionable has yet been questioned. I propose then to take up the *a posteriori* argument, and carry the appeal directly to the tribunal of history.

I ask your attention, therefore to the consideration of *the relation of Christianity to modern civilization*.

In order that the terms of this proposition may be clearly fixed in this discussion, I would remark that by Christianity, is not meant every form of belief and practice that has been called by that name, or every organization that has been denominated a Christian church. To hold Christianity responsible for every caricature of its principles and every counterfeit of its form, would be as palpably unjust, as to hold learning to be chargeable with every nauseous exhibition

of pedantry, and every villainous act of educated cunning; or liberty to be accountable for every ebullition of savage ferocity and lawless Jacobinism. By Christianity is meant the religion of the Bible, embodied with more or less purity, in the forms of the Bible, and continuing to exist in some organized form, from the date of its establishment to the present time. By civilization is meant the personal, social and civil advancement, of those things that pertain to the well being of the individual, and the well being of the community. By modern civilization is meant that state of personal domestic and civil life, which is now found in Europe and America. That many agencies have been at work in producing this complex result, is not to be questioned. From ancient Egypt, Phenicia, Babylon, Greece, Rome, Arabia, Scythia and Scandinavia, came forth the springs that have swelled and filled this wide and rolling stream of life. But from the time that the fountain was unsealed on Calvary, whose pure gushings are yet to cleanse the world, the troubled stream of European civilization has had mingled with it, the waters that issued from this hallowed source. Hence the object of this discussion is simply to disentangle this one element of the present form of civilization, and endeavor to estimate its independent and insulated influence, in the accomplishment of this manifold result. If it can be exhibited as one of the most important, if not the very prime element in this form of civilization, the question of its proper relation to American society social and civil, will be of comparatively easy solution.

It cannot surely be a matter of surprise to any intelligent mind, that to a form of religious belief should be referred an influence in producing a form of civilization. Every form of civilization that has ever existed, whether Grecian, Indian, Chaldean or Egyptian, has been greatly affected by the religion with which it has been connected. Indeed in some cases where the form of society has been theocratic, as in Egypt, and India, religion has been the sole element employed in the production of the existing form of civilization. But in all these cases, as soon as the conditions of society change, the form of religion must be broken, for it is rather a mould into which society is cast, than a plastic energy that gives it vitality

and form. Hence as soon as any inherent principle of life was infused into these societies, the inflexible mould of religion into which they had been compressed, was shivered to atoms. In this respect there is a most remarkable difference between Christianity and every other form of religion that has ever exerted an influence on civilization. It alone has proved its ability to co-exist with, and influence every possible form of society, from the most barbarous to the most refined. This peculiarity arises from the fact that it is a plastic power of life, that infuses gradually and gently its own vitality and form into whatever it touches, and not a dead, inflexible, outer form that must break in pieces with the growth and development of the society on which it is imposed. This peculiarity makes it eminently adapted to be an agent, in the production of that gigantic growth of civilization, which we now find existing in Europe and America.

These preliminary postulates being considered, I propose to discuss the proposition announced first, by taking up Roman civilization, at the point where Christianity came in contact with it, exhibiting those inherent defects in it that produced its destruction, and showing the peculiar adaption of Christianity to supply these defects; then by showing the actual influence of Christianity on the successive forms of society that have issued in the form now existing; and finally, by deducing from this historical induction, its present relation and future agency in the prevailing form of the world's civilization.

When Christianity appeared in the world, the Roman empire had reached the acme of its splendor and greatness. It had arisen from the great sea, the fourth form in the prophet's visions, dark, mysterious, iron-teethed, terrible; stamping under foot the rights of the weak and helpless; absorbing with insatiable greed and startling rapidity, provinces, states and empires, until the bannered eagle that bore those four potent initials, S. P. Q. R., saluted the sun as he wheeled up over the flashing waters of the great Euphrates, and only bade him a lingering farewell as he sunk behind the cold and stormy cliffs of Albion. The world was prostrated at the feet of this haughty and giant power, and no arm was deemed strong

enough to grapple with its Titanic strength. Rome was thus made the focus of the world, and all the riches, elegance, refinement and splendor of the earth were poured into this august and mighty metropolis. The period in question, was the culminating point of Roman greatness and magnificence. The temple of Janus was closed for the second time since its erection, and the brilliancy of intellect, literature and art that marked this period, has made its very name descriptive of the most polished era of subsequent nations, and the Augustan age to stand, by universal consent, as the magnificent type of all succeeding national splendor. But beneath this glittering exterior, the inquiring eye can detect the elements of disease and decay, that finally caused that colossal power to totter and fall before the fierce storms of the northern forests, with a crash that startled the world.

The first grand defect of Roman civilization at this time, was the want of any strong and sincere faith in any principles of virtue and religion. The ancient Roman was a man of faith, and a man of virtue according to his faith, and hence a man of power. Believing that an omniscient eye was upon him, an omnipotent arm around him, and an impartial tribunal before him, he went right forward in the pursuit of the right, like the iron man of the Færy Queen, turning not aside at the call of the siren, or the menace of the fury, but with a stern and unquailing determination following the right, though he followed it to the shades of Orcus, and the tribunal of Rhadamanthus. It was this sublime martyr faith in what he believed to be duty to the gods and duty to men, that made the ancient Roman at once the model and the monarch of his race, and rendered Roman arms and Roman policy invincible. The history of early Rome, even through the fabulous narrations of Livy, is brilliant with unquestionable proofs of this fact.

But when we come to examine the Augustan era, we find a mournful change in the character of the people. As in Greece religion had degenerated into a mere love for the fine arts, so in Rome the only residuum left of this ancient religion, was a species of patriotism. All genuine faith in religion was extinct, so that the eloquent and philosophic Cicero, in spite of his disquisitions in favor

of the existence of the gods, and the immortality of the soul, more than hints at his doubts of both, and openly expresses his wonder that the augurs could look each other in the face without laughing. The rhetorical treatise addressed to Hereinius and ascribed to Cicero, evinces incidentally and unconsciously a corruption of society in every department of it, that is even more startling and appalling, than the direct evidences of depravity set forth in the caustic pages of Horace, Persius and Juvenal. Religion had degenerated, according to the nature of the mind with which it dealt, either into superstition or infidelity, and the sole renovators of society, were to be found in the sty of Epicurus or the kennel of Diogenes. There was no motive impelling the mass of society to virtue drawn from this life, for its only reward was privation and ridicule; and none drawn from the life to come, for that was deemed a fable. Hence passion and appetite in every form were let loose, in all their hideous shapes of brutality and ferocity, without a check, but that of bitter rivalry and hostile collision. The proofs of these allegations present themselves in sickening and disgusting detail, in almost every work remaining of that splendid but rotten age. Nor was the tendency of this condition of society unseen by philosophic observers. The pages of Livy, Sallust, Pliny the Elder, Plutarch and Tacitus evince a painful sense of the malady, without any knowledge of the remedy. That remedy must be a religion simple enough to be grasped by the faith of the poor and ignorant; lofty enough to command the faith of the intellectual and learned; sublime enough in its teachings to breathe a new life into the dying age; pure enough in its requisitions to cleanse the filthiness of this huge Angean stable; and strong enough in its hopes and influences to exorcise the unclean spirits, whose name was Legion; and such a religion alone was found in Christianity.

Another serious and fatal defect in this civilization, was the social position of woman, and the domestic relations of society. The family is the fountain of civilization, and woman is the tutelary spirit of the family. It is in the household that the purest and holiest affections take their earliest rise, and around the household that they will cling and twine with their longest and fondest attach-

ment. It is in the sweet influences of family scenes, and family affections, that those pure and vestal principles of noble acts, are it in the secret shrines of the human heart, that are the last to be quenched in the career of vice, and that often, casting their high and starry brightness on the troubled sea of ambition, debauchery and despair, gently lure the wayward and weary voyager back to the calm and peaceful track that leads to the happy isles of the blest. "The child is the father of the man;" and the mother is the moulding architect that forms the child. Let the homestead be a place of pure and holy breathings, embosomed in an atmosphere of virtue and truth; and the young heart will drink in their sunny influences like the opening flower, and develop them in the rich foliage and clustering fruit of purpling maturity and green old age. Hence a nation's households embosom a nation's destiny.

When we look at Rome in the high and palmy days of her prosperity, we find that although her households were never to be compared with a Christian home, or her wives and mothers with Christian matrons, yet she possessed many such wives as Lucretia, and many such mothers as Cornelia. But at the period under discussion corruption the most loathsome and festering had reached the households of Rome, and poisoned society at its very fountain. It is a significant fact, that of all the touching and beautiful pictures given us, in the undying literature of this period, there occur so few delineations of the domestic affections; so few recognitions of anything like a home; so few of those artless touches of deep and thrilling emotion that cause the eye to glisten, and the heart to swell over pages of a Burns, a Wilson, or an Irving. On the contrary, in the pages of Juvenal and Horace, and especially of Tacitus, we have some pictures of Roman homes, sketched in colors so ghastly and horrible, that the pencil seems dipped in the lurid flames of the pit. Licentiousness, jealousy, discord and hate; plots of husband against wife, and wife against husband; mothers sacrificing their own children, to their shameless and horrible lusts; divorces succeeding divorces with disgusting frequency; and in default of these the dagger or the poisoned bowl, made the ready pander to brutal appetites; murder, perjury, suicide, robbery and incest; these are

the elements composing these horrible pictures. In the later days of the empire, marriage was deemed a degrading yoke, and children a curse; the wife was a mere slave, and learning, and cultivation of mind deemed only proper for the courtesan. Hence there was needed, that effeminaey should not lead to utter extinction, some agency that would purify the domestic relations; cause husband and wife, and parent and child, to regard each other with suitable affection; and lift the wife, the mother, the sister and the daughter to their proper position, as the golden links that sweetly and softly bind into one the jarring elements of society. Such an agency was Christianity, the only religion on earth that raises woman to her proper position, and thus creates a home.

Another serious defect was the gradual decrease of a hardy, robust, industrious middle class in Roman society, having an interest in maintaining her institutions in peace, and defending them in war. The importance of such a class in every government, is too manifest to require a moment's remark. No good government can exist without it. It is true we do not find in any ancient government, a body of men corresponding to the vast middle class of modern society, the mighty *tiers etat*, who are now the real rulers of the world. But in ancient Rome we find perhaps a nearer approach to this class, than we do in any other community, except the Hebrew commonwealth under the judges and early kings. The hardy yeomanry of Latium, whose nerves and muscles were strung by agricultural toil, manly exercise and virtuous habits, were thus fitted to put on the massive armor of the legionary, and go forth to the conquest of the world. But when in the third and fourth century of the Christian era, the fierce barbaric hordes came down like the vulture on his prey, we look in vain for this class. They are extinct. The rich fields that once stretched along the Alps and Apennines, are deserted and barren, and the place that their hardy cultivators once occupied in the armies filled by the rude Dacian, the fierce Hun and the barbaric Goth. Hence when these hired defenders chose to grasp the rich prize they had hitherto protected, there was no force adequate to resist them. What then produced this strange and fatal destruction of so important a class of men, and thus the

destruction of the empire? We find all the causes at work during the Augustan age.

The first was the gratuitous distribution by the government to the people first of grain, then of bread, and finally of every necessary of life. These staples of subsistence were drawn from the rich and conquered provinces of Egypt, Lybia and Sicily, which by reason of their superior advantages of soil and climate, were able to undersell the Italian agriculturists, and thus drive them from the market. Discouraging native agriculture, and paying a premium to idleness, by this gratuitous distribution, we find that at this very period, Cicero testifies that not more than 2000 citizens, out of the vast population of Rome, possessed the means of independent subsistence. Hence the race of agriculturists gradually withdrew from this unequal and bootless contest, and forsaking their fields, became lost in the needy crowd of hungry retainers in the city. As the barbarians began to make their pillaging incursions, the frontier districts became insecure, and were therefore gradually abandoned. But by the absurd municipal regulations of Rome, the amount of tax levied on these provinces remained precisely what it was when they were populous and flourishing. Hence as the population decreased, and the rewards of labor diminished, while the tax required from each province remained the same, it soon required all the labor of the husbandman to meet the enormous and increasing burden of taxation that fell to his share. This insane policy tended to depopulate entirely the agricultural districts, and destroy their hardy, rural, industrial population on which the state had once so much depended.

Another cause of the disappearance of this middle class of society, was the enormous increase of the slave population. By reason of the numerous captives taken in war, and the natural increase of the slaves, they at last numbered from 50 to 60,000,000 of souls, and single families in Rome possessed from 20 to 30,000. Labor thus became cheap and degrading, and the laboring class of freemen gradually disappeared. An enormous drain was made on the resources of the republic, for the maintenance of the slave population, and in consequence of their cruel treatment, a hardy and powerful

race was created burdensome to the commonwealth, yet bitterly hostile to its interests. The natural result of this process was seen in the invasion of Rome by Alaric, when 40,000 slaves joined him in a body, and became his most desperate and ferocious soldiers.

There was therefore needed an agency that would remove these monstrous inequalities of society, and give to honest labor its proper dignity, and that agency was found alone in the religion that declared, "he that will not work shall not eat."

The last serious defect that we notice, is the want of any proper feelings of common humanity. The very etymology of the word humanity, suggests the social and political importance of the feelings included in the term. A nation that lacks these feelings, not only falls short of the proper standard of civilization, but ultimately procures its own destruction by one of the inevitable laws of providence. It is true a Roman audience could rise up in admiration of that noble expression of human brotherhood "*homo sum, et nil humani a me alienum puto*," but it is also true, that this same audience, perhaps, could the next hour raise a shout of equal applause over the shrieking victim, writhing in the jaws of wild beasts, or the bleeding form of the dying gladiator. Tens of thousands of wretched combatants were sometimes brought forward at a single gladiatorial show, to glut that savage and cowardly thirst for cruelty and blood, that only grew with its gratification. When to this we add the brutal treatment received by the sickly infant; the decrepit parent; the hapless victim of disease and accident; the wounded soldier; the captive foe and the miserable slave; we see a savage ferocity that provoked the vengeance of both God and man, and that it might not work the utter ruin of the society that harbored it, required for its cure a religion that delighted not in blood; whose spirit was love, and whose model him that cried, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." We see from this rapid sketch of the defects of Roman civilization, there was ample scope for the exertion of the peculiar influences of Christianity; that the very causes that produced the downfall of this mighty power, were directly antagonistic to the whole spirit and temper of Christianity; and that hence if it exerted any influence at all on

society, that influence must be adverse to these causes of ruin, and therefore conservative and salutary. But it was impossible for anything short of a miracle to arrest the downfall of the existing form of the Roman empire. It had passed from the budding vigor of its wolf-nursed youth, through the crowned and imperial strength of an iron maturity, to the driveling dotage of an effete and corrupt old age. Christianity might retard its dissolution, but possessed no Medean charm, or elixir of immortality to bring the vigor of youth back to its tottering frame. The doom of destiny was upon it, and it must go down to the grave.

Hence we are to look for the legitimate influences of Christianity, not so much in the worn-out and rotten framework of Roman power, as in the elements of society that necessarily remained to form a new organization. We turn then to examine the extent to which Christianity fulfilled the high mission to which it was called as the regenerating agent of European society. We are aware that there were other influences at work, but we do not hazard too much in saying, that whilst any of these influences might have been spared, all combined would have been powerless without Christianity; and therefore that it alone is the prime, indispensable and essential element of European and American civilization.

European history may, for our present purpose, be divided into five periods, sufficiently designated as, the Imperial, the Barbarian, the Feudal, the Transition and the Reformed. Let us trace the relation of Christianity to civilization during these successive periods.

During the first period its influence was limited because of its repeated persecutions, and soon after these persecutions ceased by the civil establishment of Christianity, the imperial form of society was broken to pieces. But still its influences were gradually and silently diffusing themselves through society, so that in the time of Trajan we know from official documents that paganism had greatly declined; and in the latter part of the second century Tertullian could exclaim, "We are but of yesterday, yet we have filled your islands, towns and burghs; the camp, the senate and the forum, and every age, sex and rank are converts," and in A. D. 306 it was enthroned on the seat of the Cæsars under Constantine. The Christian

writers of this period, particularly Justin Martyr, Origen, Tertullian and Lactantius, build their most triumphant arguments in its favor from the manifest influence it had in purifying society.

It appears, also, from the Theodosian code, that it exerted a very decided influence in modifying Roman jurisprudence. It abolished theatrical and gladiatorial representations; improved the condition of slaves and prisoners; limited the power of fathers over their children; invested woman with new rights; and caused more ample protection to be extended to widows and orphans.

From these and similar monuments remaining of this period, it is manifest that the influence of Christianity was eminently salutary and conservative, tending to enable Roman society, if not to recover the strength of the living, at least to retain one of the privileges of the dying, that of transmitting to successors some of its most valuable possessions, and becoming thus the civil and political testator of modern society.

When we approach the next period, the *Barbarian* era of European society, we are met with a most wonderful and unexampled phenomenon in history. From the close of the first until the commencement of the fifth century, did those fierce and fiery swarms, which had been roused from the dark forests of the north by the spears of Germanicus and Cæsar, continue in retaliation to assail their former invaders. From being despised and conquered, they were first feared, then deprecated, then bribed, until at last, tempted by the rich and sunny fields of Italy, and emboldened by the cowering weakness of luxurious and enfeebled Rome, they burst forth in a torrent of fire and steel, and swept from the feeble hands of the degenerate Roman the trembling sceptre of the western world. But when the lawless barbarian had broken down the outer walls and battlements of Roman greatness and might, he was suddenly confronted by another power before whose awful glance and majestic mien even his ferocious heart quailed, and to whose high and unearthly authority even his proud spirit succumbed. That power was Christianity, although coming into direct collision with that proud spirit of personal independence so strong in the barbarian heart; and although putting many restraints on his wild and lawless passions that must have been irksome, yet

such was the secret might that was felt to reside in this embodied form of a divine life, corrupted and enfeebled though it had already become, that the stern and lion-hearted children of the forest meekly and quietly bowed down at its feet. The influence of Christianity, during this period, was of incalculable importance to the succeeding history of civilization. It gave a common bond of sympathy and union to tribes that hitherto had been hostile and immiscible, incapable of being fused into any national form. It taught the rude barbarian the majesty of law, in what he deemed a most sacred and unimpeachable repository. It secured in his mind the habit of absolute submission to an authority higher than mere brute strength, and taught him that first law of all civilization, obedience to a moral power, by virtue of a moral force, and thus prepared his wild and untamed nature for submission to other repositories of power, and finally, by separating the temporal and spiritual powers, it taught the great basis truth of liberty of conscience, that physical power has no right to coerce the honest convictions of the soul. It is not too much to say that, had it not been for the conservative influence of the Christian church during this period, the downfall of Roman civilization, like that of Egyptian, Assyrian and Grecian glory, would now have been marked only by such mournful relics of perished grandeur, as those that lie strewn over the lonely solitudes of Memphis and Babylon, and the dead cities of the old and buried world.

From this rude and chaotic condition of society, there emerged a new form of social existence which, although imperfect and susceptible of the grossest abuses of tyranny, was yet perhaps the only possible form into which these heterogeneous materials could be moulded. This form constitutes the *Feudal* era of European history, and extends from the sixth to the tenth or twelfth century.

That the feudal system had great and grievous defects, furnishing no defence to the serf against the capricious tyranny of the baron; no fixed system of law and government; no connecting bond of society; no fusing principle of nationality, and that it engrafted features on the common law which, in spite of the efforts of modern jurists, still continue to deform it, cannot be denied. But it may

fairly be questioned, whether, bad as it confessedly was, it was not the best possible system under the circumstances. Society was in a state of chaotic confusion, and this system of nuclei of attraction was perhaps the only possible agency that could bring these jarring elements into a homogeneous whole. It, however, afforded scope for the influence of Christianity. Then first were its teachings as to the social position of woman properly established. Shut up in his solitary castle, the baron was forced to depend on his wife and children for sympathy and society during much of his time, and thus their legitimate importance and influence became gradually felt and recognized. Hence it is in the feudal era that we begin to find the family and the home of modern society. The priest also acted as a mediator between the haughty lordling on his castled crag and the dependent serfs, whose huts were clustered around its base; softening down the indomitable pride of the one, and refining the barbarian rudeness of the other. But during this long and dark period of European history, the influence of Christianity must have been secret if not limited, and only preparatory to those grand events that were again to break up the forms of society, and produce new combinations.

These influences began to develop themselves in the fourth great period of European history, constituting it the *Transition* era of its society, and extending from the tenth or twelfth, to the sixteenth century. The influence of Christianity is marked in its great transition movements.

The first of these was the *Crusades*. These mighty and ocean-like movements broke up the vast and silent surface of frozen Europe, precipitating its shivering and massive fragments on the shores of the strange and storied east, but in its reflux tide bore back a rich freight of blessings. It enlarged national conceptions and strengthened national bonds. It checked the enormous tyranny of the feudal system, breaking up the overgrown fiefs, and bringing up from the serfs that mighty middle class soon to ascend the throne of the world. It created free cities that served as nurseries for the ideas of liberty, that were one day to bring forth fruit more terrible to tyrants than the fabled teeth of Cadmus. It cherished into ex-

istence a commercial spirit in southern Europe, that evoked with its wand of magic power the opulence of Genoa, Florence, Pisa, Venice, Portugal and Spain. Inasmuch as these advantages were all procured by the crusades, we owe them incidentally at least to that Christianity without which the crusades, or any such vast earthquake movement of society, would have been utterly impossible.

The next was the institution of *Chivalry*. When the spirit of romantic adventure aroused by the crusades, could find no more scope in purging the holy soil of the sacrilegious paynim, it demanded some other field of exertion, either in the cause of virtue or of vice. Fortunately for the world it assumed a form which although stilted, pompous and extravagant, and worthily satirized in its absurdities by the pens of a Cervantes and a Butler, yet conferred no small blessing on society. It breathed sentiments of high honor and delicate courtesy into men's hearts; inspired a disgust and horror of perfidy and falsehood; cherished an uncompromising hostility to injustice; elevated woman in society; made her oppression and maltreatment to be regarded as brutality and cowardice; and introduced refinement into the intercourse of peace, and humanity and generosity into the contests of war. It is well known, however, that chivalry was closely allied to Christianity, drawing its laws and sanctions from the precepts of the Gospel, hallowing its knightly investitures and tournaments with religious ceremonies, and thus aiding to infuse the principles of Christianity into the heart of society.

During this period Christianity was gradually infusing more justice and humanity into the jurisprudence of Europe. During the barbarian and feudal periods, law in civil courts was either a chance-medley or a mockery, according to the caprice of its dispensers. In ecclesiastical courts, however, a regular system of judicial procedure under the name of the canon law, extracted partly from the Roman law, and partly from the Gospel, was gradually introduced and extended to all who were called *clerici*. Hence the phrase "benefit of clergy," now so unmeaning, was then fraught with deep significance, for to be tried in a civil court was to be

brutally oppressed, or subjected to a silly ordeal of fire, water or sword, while to be tried in an ecclesiastical court was at least to be tried by law, with the power of appeal to a higher tribunal. The clergy constantly endeavored to have the legal forms of the canon law, which embodied all that was good of the old civil law, introduced into the feudal courts; and it is to this infusion of the humane spirit of the Gospel, and the excellent forms of the Roman law, made by the efforts of the church, that we owe many of the most valuable forms and principles of the common law.

Another important part performed by Christianity, during this period, was its influence in the gradual extinction of slavery. Whatever other agencies were at work to accomplish this result, Christianity must be regarded as unquestionably the chief and most efficient. The first voice against the system was raised in the church, and the strongest motives impelling to its overthrow were drawn from the free and equalizing spirit of the Bible. Most of the charters of manumission granted prior to the time of Louis X., and Philip the Long, when slavery was formally abolished in France, were given in express terms, *pro amore dei*, *pro remedio animæ*, and *pro mercede animæ*. In some of the laws and charters the reasoning is extended and based solely on the doctrines of Christianity. However erroneous logically and theologically, some of these reasonings may be, yet they furnish indisputable evidence of the motives impelling those who acted on them, and show that it is to Christianity we owe chiefly the removal of that system of servitude so fatal to Roman society, and so deadening and benumbing to the energies of those who, when freed from its influence, have become one of the most important classes of the modern world.

It is also in part to Christianity that we owe the gradual destruction of the barbarous custom of private war. So fruitful of evil was this custom that many efforts were made for its suppression. But even the genius and power of Charlemagne were found inadequate to the task. The church labored first for its restraint within prescribed limits by sacred truces, and finally for its entire destruction; which was at length to the great benefit of society in a great measure accomplished.

The field of intellect and learning during this long period is sadly devoid of interest. But whatever learning did exist was found in the church. In the monasteries and holy places the relics of classic lore were kept safe from the sweeping ravages of barbarism and ignorance, which, in less sacred depositories, were sacrificed to a ferocious thirst for indiscriminate destruction. While kings, nobles and warriors despised learning as effeminate and degrading, ecclesiastics were at least feebly endeavoring to preserve its treasures from entire destruction. And the scholastic philosophy, which was solely employed on the facts and doctrines of Christianity, although containing much that was frivolous and ridiculous, was yet the mother of the science of modern times. It gradually procured the creation of universities and colleges; and thus began the great work of training the universal mind, which has since issued in the magnificent apparatus of modern education. In this work Christianity wrought unaided. There is not a college or university of any note in Europe, nor indeed to a great extent in America that has not been founded directly by Christianity, founded as an eleemosynary institution, and founded from religious motives.

Hence when the human mind was beginning to awake to a new activity at the close of this *Transition* period, and was quickened by the invention of printing, the change of national and social relation produced by the use of gunpowder and cannon in warfare; the terrible irruption of the fierce and turbaned hordes of Tartary; the fall of Constantinople, and the consequent scattering of the treasures of Grecian lore there collected; the discovery of a new continent and a new passage to an old one; and when as the result of this universal resurrection of the intellect of Europe, learning began to flourish, most of its protectors and patrons prized it mainly as a handmaid to Christianity. It is only necessary to name a Roger Bacon, a Dante, a Wickliffe, a Petrarch, a Ximenes, an Erasmus, a Luther, a Knox and an Usher: and the fact that with but one or two exceptions, the names found brightest in the scroll of literary glory at this period were ecclesiastics, to show the intimate relation occupied by Christianity to the revival of letters.

When we approach the last great period of European history

the *Reformation* era, we enter perhaps the most august apartment in the great temple of history that has ever been unveiled to the gaze of man. Darkness had indeed covered the earth, and a slumber of centuries had enveloped the world—but,

“ From out that midnight so dark and deep
A voice cried, Ho! awaken!
And the sleepers aroused themselves from sleep
And the thrones of the earth were shaken.”

The trains that had been silently preparing in the deep and slumbering night of the past, now flamed out in a conflagration that proved a beacon-fire for the world. At this sacred flame have science, art, literature, liberty, and civilization in all its forms, lit their ten thousand torches, the light of which now blazes around us. There are two general positions that embody the whole argument to be drawn from this period of history, which we can only announce. The first is, that the Reformation is the one great fact of modern civilization, the fountain from which have flowed its richest results, and the other is, that Christianity is the one great fact of the Reformation, that which gave it most of its significance and power. The fettering despotism of ghostly authority was broken; the barriers that had restrained Christianity from coming in quickening contact with the minds of men were swept away; and the unchained energies of the human soul leaped forward like a torrent in the career of improvement. Hence the latter part of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries produced more men of Titanic stature in mind and soul, than have ever appeared within the same period since the creation; and the colossal monuments of their labors that they have built up in the world's history, remain to tell to other times that there were giants in those days. The field that thus opens to us is magnificent, but too wide to be entered upon fully at this stage of the discussion.

It is impossible to develop in detail the precise channels by which Christianity is brought into influential contact with the world's civilization. As well might we attempt to trace the separate paths of the infinite rays of the sun, in their passage from the brightness of their home in the skies, through the dark and dripping chambers of the earth, and the mysterious channels of fibre, root and stem, to

the greenness and bloom of spring, the richness and splendor of summer, or the purple glory and beauty of autumn. The influence of Christianity on society is not exerted through the cannon of the warrior, and the dispatches of the statesman, but in the sweet breathings of truth that come on the opening petals of the heart of infancy, like spice-laden zephyrs from the land of the blest; in the gentle words of love that fall in dewy freshness on the wondering ear of childhood, from gray-haired sires and sweet-voiced matrons; in the nameless tellings of high and holy things, wrapped in the deep, unutterable voices of the ancient eternities, that come to the silent ear of youth, before the din and strife of the babbling world have stunned these inner senses of the soul; in the longing and wistful thoughts of things of deep, abyssmal mystery that steal into the soul in its lonely musings in the solitary chamber; in the deep hush of the moaning forest; in the awful silence of the hollow midnight; in the seasons of gloomy doubt and frantic effort to scale the prison wall of mystery and darkness that rises and closes in encircling silence around us; in times of heart-sickness and disappointment, when reaching forth the hand of warm and confiding trust, it grasps the cold and slippery skin of the adder; it is then that Christianity, with its wonderful tellings of infinite things, comes with apocalyptic splendor and power, and revealing itself to the soul, creates those martyr spirits that stamp their lineaments on the enduring rock.

But without attempting to dissect influences so subtle, yet so powerful as these, we have facts sufficient for the argument.

What Christian state requires or even permits the mother to cast her sickly and decrepit child into the cave of the Taygetus; the child to forsake the aged and helpless parent; the harmless slaves to be murdered, that their dying groans may be a requiem to the shade of the departed master; thousands of an unarmed, inoffensive Helot race to be massacred in a single night to prevent their undue increase; thousands of men to be trained and fattened to butcher each other in gladiatorial show, for the amusement of a brutal populace; captives in war to be massacred in cold blood or enslaved, or vices the most loathsome and horrible to be canonized and sanctioned, not only by the laws of man, but by the very laws and

examples of the gods themselves? Whence these amazing advances upon ancient civilization? We answer from Christianity. It is not because the whole world has advanced beyond the civilization of antiquity, for we can still point to many a wide land on the earth reeking with cruelty and crime. And where do we find the highest and purest form of civilization? Where do we find the physical power and energy of the world, the nations who can spread the broad ægis of their national protection over the humblest citizen in the most distant and barbarous land, and shield him from harm by the talisman of a name? Where do we find the commerce, the productive capital, the growing wealth, the improvements and discoveries in machinery, in art and in agriculture? Where do we find the colleges, the universities and the common schools, and the instruction of the minds of the masses? Where the profoundest philosophy, the loftiest science, the finest literature, and the most active intellect? Where are the hospitals, the asylums, the institutions for the relief of the unfortunate and wretched? Where are the constitutional governments of the world, the governments where life, property and reputation are most inviolate, where rights are most clearly defined, and liberty most extensively enjoyed, and laws most wisely enacted and righteously administered? Where are the rights of the friendless poor, the widowed mother and the orphaned child most sacredly regarded? We answer only in Christian lands. It is true there are many grievous defects in these countries, but we defy the subtlest ingenuity to point out a single defect that Christianity does not tend to remove, or a single excellence which it does not tend to heighten. As far as Christianity has been wrought into the texture of society, so far do we find civilization to be advanced, and where we find that advance incomplete, it can be explained by the imperfect adoption of Christianity.

Now why are not these things true of other lands? Why has civilization been stationary or retrograde, wherever it has been disconnected with Christianity? The same blue sky hangs in its azure beauty over the Ægean and the Adriatic that gilded the glory of Augustus and the splendor of Pericles; the same hoary Lebanon lifts its giant brow to heaven that shadowed the queenly Palmyra, and the gorgeous Heliopolis; the same bright sun is mirrored forth

om the flashing Euphrates, that crowned with its coronal of glory the lofty turrets of Nineveh, and the glittering battlements of Babylon; the same old Nile pours its fertilizing tide, in grandeur and mystery along, that carried the barges of Cleopatra and the galleys of Sesostris; but all that remains of the glory that once encircled these storied spots are the crumbling arch, the broken columns, the fissured wall, the mournful signature of time in the handwriting of death. Why have Turkey, Persia, Syria, and the sunny climes of the east, with the finest harbors, the richest soils, the balmiest climates, and the most varied products in the world, been left to such wide-spread barrenness and desolation, while the cold and misty islands of Britain, and the ice and granite-bound land of the Pilgrims, have fostered and produced the greenest and palmiest growth of civilization that has ever blessed the world? The answer must be, that the one possessed Christianity, while the others did not; the one possessed a religion that promoted temperance, industry, honesty, justice and energy of character, while the others possessed a religion that was either powerless to correct the deadly evils of their social state, or if affecting it at all, making a nation of sensualists, of tyrants and of slaves.

When therefore we look at the nature of Christianity; that there is not an element of social prosperity which it does not directly or indirectly foster; that there is not a single bane of national or individual weal, that it does not discourage; that it brings to the work of fostering the one, and destroying the other, an influence mightier than the shifting expedients of the mere politician, or the blustering bravado of the mere warrior; that it enforces its salutary commands and restrictions with sanctions the most tremendous and motives that loom up in their trenchant and terrible might from the dark abysses of eternity; that it possessed the very agencies adapted to counteract the causes of the downfall of the Roman empire; that in point of fact these causes were so counteracted, that its influence was eminently salutary and conservative during the different periods of the history of modern civilization; that like Ceres the grass has grown greener under its footsteps, until now the nations that enjoy its influence in anything like fullness, are like the land of Goshen mantled with light, while others are shrouded in dark-

ness ; or, like Gideon's fleece, are visited with the dews of prosperity, while others are cursed with aridity and death ; and when we look in vain for any other cause to explain this marked distinction, we are warranted to conclude that Christianity is the grand agent appointed by the Ruler of nations for the renovation of the world in time as well as in eternity ; that it is the grand and prime element of efficiency in modern civilization, and that the nation which possesses it in its purity has a talisman of safety more potent than the Ancilian shield of Rome, or the Palladian image of Troy ; a protection more impregnable than the wooden walls of Athens, or the rocky barriers of Petra ; a defence more invincible than girdling navies and bristling battalions ; for it will have the wall of fire and munition of rocks, the protecting shield of Almightyness, and the defence of that red right arm that wields the thunder and upholds the world.

If this course of reasoning be correct, how magnificent is the prospect that opens to our country, if her sons shall be true at once to God and their native land. Let this pure and powerful principle of civilization be diffused through our vast and growing Republic, and who shall cast the horoscope of its greatness ? The living tide of population shall swell and roll until it meets the waves of the broad Pacific ; but instead of the clangor of war, and the gleaming of arms, there shall rise to heaven but the busy hum of industry and the waving richness of plenty ; the broad Alleghanies shall answer to the snowy Cordilleras in accents of peace and gladness : while from the foam and thunder of Niagara to where the father of waters rolls his mighty tide beneath a tropical sun, from every templed hill and every teeming valley there shall rise the grateful hymn of millions of free and faithful hearts,

God of stillness ! God of motion !
Of the rainbow, and the ocean ;
God of mountain, rock and river,
Blessed be thy name forever !

Nor shall this be the only spectacle of grandeur and beauty to stand as a monument of the social influence of Christianity. There comes a time when the ancient fetters and manacles that so long have bound scarred and hoary Europe, shall be before its awakened

night like flax to the flame ; when the silent and petrified despots of Asia shall be shivered in pieces before the resistless growth of the emancipating spirit of the gospel ; and the dark jungles and deserts of Africa shall rejoice and blossom with a richer and righter garniture of beauty than ever greeted her radiant skies ; when, instead of the dreary stillness and monotony of the vast and lumbering east, there shall be the cheerful hum of commerce and industry, the smiling fields and happy homes of honest labor, and the freedom and security of just and powerful laws ; instead of the tinkling camel's bell and the weary undulations of the tardy caravan, there shall be the rattling engine and the rushing boat ; and instead of the bristling pagoda, the towering minaret, or the gloomy temple, there shall be the thronged houses of God, and the thronged halls of science, the tall spire of the village church, and the beaten play-ground of the village school-house. The turbaned Turk shall awake from his sullen dream of sensuality and sloth, and tearing from his banner the gleaming crescent, and sheathing the bloody yataghan, shall bow meekly at the foot of the cross. The wild Cossack and the shivering Siberian shall learn to serve a milder and yet a mightier monarch than the haughty autocrat. The besotted Hindoo and the fierce Malay shall dash to the earth the hideous symbols of a degrading superstition, and rise to the dignity of a renewed humanity. The miserable Caffre and the reeking Hottentot shall come forth from their squalid filth and wretchedness, and sit down clothed and in their right mind at the feet of Jesus. The wild Arab and the untamed Tartar, as they scour their illimitable deserts, shall rein in their flying barbs, to catch the sounds of these wondrous tidings. And the Christian sailor, as he floats over the glassy seas, and beneath the burnished skies of another hemisphere, shall see rising above the queenly palm and the spreading banian the glittering spires of a pure faith, and hear borne on the spicy gale that comes breathing its strange fragrance around his brow, the sound of the church-going bell, and the rich melody of strains that awake the memories of forgotten years, and bring back the sweet scenes of homes that lie far away over the blue waves of the ocean. The sword shall no more be stained with the blood of the innocent and helpless ; the green earth shall no longer be reddened

with the carnage of the battle-field ; the wild whirlpool of anarchy and revolution shall no more fling up to heaven its bloody and hellish spray ; the groan of the oppressed and the moaning cry of the helpless, shall be heard no more ; but the lofty dreamings of Plato ; the exulting strains of Virgil ; the weird numbers of the Sybil, and higher and truer still the rapt visions of Isaiah, and the mystic imagery of the lone exile of Patmos, and the longing, waiting, sorrowing hopes of a weary and groaning creation shall be fully embodied in the calm, peaceful, hallowed and bloodless scenes of the Sabbath of the world.

Gentlemen of the General Union Philosophical Society, I have thus endeavored, at the risk of perhaps a slight departure from the ordinary range of such addresses as the present, to set before you a theme that I have attempted to show is of vital interest to the age in which we live ; a theme the importance of which was felt in other times more deeply than it is now ; and the felt importance of which was the living principle of energy in a Cromwell, a Hampden, a Milton, and some of the mightiest spirits that have ever been revealed in history, and yet a theme in which our age has little practical faith. But this phase of the human mind is rapidly changing. The frigid and skepticleal era of the latter part of the eighteenth and first part of the nineteenth century is passing away, and in its stead is coming an era of faith. The cold, sneering, Satanic school of literature, that held its sway twenty-five years ago, whose flippant philosophy could admit nothing that it could not comprehend, and comprehend nothing deeper than itself, is giving place to a tone at least of respectful inquiry, if not of earnest belief ; to a deeper philosophy, and a loftier literature. A Carlyle, a Macaulay, an Arnold and a Guizot, and men who can see " God in history," are taking the place of a Hume, a Gibbon, a Byron, a Voltaire and others, to whom religion was either a womanish weakness or an impious imposture. At this moment there is scarcely a nation in Europe whose councils are not more profoundly moved by religious questions than they ever have been since the treaty of Westphalia. And this is but the first note of preparation for still profounder movements. The same prophetic chart that pictures forth in its bold and beautiful imagery, the sabbatic scenes of the future triumphs of Christianity, also

assures us that this triumph will be neither a silent nor perhaps bloodless one, and that the powers that have so long ruled the descendant, will not yield their iron grasp on humanity, without a fierce and terrible struggle. Hence there comes also, a day that has loomed in its dark and terrific grandeur to the eye of the prophetic seer at every point of the past ; when the embattled hosts of truth and falsehood shall be marshaled for a final and deadly conflict ; when the fountains of the great deep of society shall be broken up, and the rushing surge of this flood-tide of the world shall sweep away the hoary and time-worn institutions of the past, like foam on the cataract's plunge ; when there shall be "signs in the sun, and the moon and the stars, on the earth, distress of nations and perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after the things that are to come upon the earth ;" and the billows of this mighty commotion shall heave and dash against every fabric in which human hopes are garnered. For these dread scenes are the elements of collision silently and swiftly preparing. We may dream, and doubt, and laugh and deride, but we stay not the footsteps of destiny. We must act our part in these scenes, sowing the seed of dragon's teeth, or reaping the fell harvest, whether we will or not : sharing in the triumph as a crowned and laureled conqueror, or as a chained and vanquished captive, bound ignobly at the wheels of the triumphal car of victory.

A few short years of preparation, and those of you who are not destined to sleep in an early grave, will go forth to do your task in this mighty work. Hasten not unduly to rush forth into the strife, for remember that he who would be eminently useful to his race, must spend the early part of his career in toilsome obscurity. But when you leave these hallowed scenes of seclusion and study for the great world beyond you, go forth feeling that life is an earnest thing, and that he must be earnest who would grapple with its mysteries. Go forth, not to fritter away your energies in ignoble indolence ; not to herd with that degraded and melancholy few whose sole ambition seems to be, to make a nature, created a little lower than the angel, become a little lower than the brute ; not to

sell yourselves as the drudges and bond-slaves of mammon, or to be the obsequious tools of designing demagogues; but to throw yourselves in the gap that is yet to open; to stand in the Thermopylæ of history that is coming; to do your part in the great work of the world's civilization by seeking its Christianization. Shallowness may call this cant, or flippancy superstition, infidelity may rail at it as bigotry, and imbecility as chimera, but the voice of the past and the voice of the future alike proclaim it the noblest cause in which to live, and the noblest cause for which to die. Trials you may meet, toils you may encounter, enemies you may arouse, calumny you may provoke, tears you may shed, and disappointments you may feel; but remember that

“The soul of man
Createth its own destiny of power;
And as the trial is intenser here,
His being hath a nobler strength in heaven.
What is its earthly victory? Press on!
For it hath tempted angels. Yet press on!
And from the eyrie of your eagle-thought,
Ye shall look down on monarchs. O press on!
For the high ones and powerful shall come
To do you reverence; and the beautiful
Will know the purer language of your brow,
And read it like a talisman of love!
Press on! for it is godlike to unloose
The spirit and forget yourself in thought;
Bending a pinion for the deeper sky,
And in the very fetters of your flesh
Mating with the pure essences of heaven!
Press on! ‘for in the grave, there is no work
And no device.’ Press on! while yet ye may!”—

And though your names may never gild the flaunting page of history, or your record be engraved on the monumental marble to mark the spot that shrines your dust, yet you shall have a more enduring memorial in the glad hearts you have cherished, and the sad hearts you have cheered, and more enduring still in that dread and awful scroll whose words of flame have been written by the finger of the Almighty; whose seals shall be opened in the terrific scenes of the judgment, and whose pages shall be unfolded in the retributions of eternity.